

Portland State University

**PDXScholar**

---

All Sustainability History Project Oral Histories

Special Collections: Sustainability History Project

---

8-10-2011

## Interview with Christian Ettinger, Hopworks, 2011 (audio)

Christian Ettinger

Follow this and additional works at: <https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/sustainhist>



Part of the [Food and Beverage Management Commons](#), and the [Sustainability Commons](#)

**Let us know how access to this document benefits you.**

---

### Recommended Citation

Demming, Scott, "Interview with Christian Ettinger, 2011 (audio)" (2011). Sustainability History Project. <http://archives.pdx.edu/ds/psu/10741>

This Interview is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Sustainability History Project Oral Histories by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: [pdxscholar@pdx.edu](mailto:pdxscholar@pdx.edu).

**PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**SUSTAINABILITY HISTORY PROJECT**  
**INTERVIEW INDEX**

INTERVIEWEE: Christian Ettinger

Interviewer: Scott Demming

Date: 10August 2011

Location of Interview: Hopworks SE Powell Location

Research Assistant:

Interview Series: Documenting Sustainable Practices in the Pacific Northwest

Recording Equipment: DIGITAL RECORDER (WINDOWS MEDIA AUDIO FILE) WITH AN EXTERNAL, OMNIDIRECTIONAL MICROPHONE

Time	Notes
00:38	1. How long have you lived in Portland?
	A. 38years, family moved from San Francisco when I was 4.
00:52	2. What kinds of education did you pursue after high school?
	A. University of Oregon degree in Business and Marketing – certified through Brewers Guild.
01:25	3. You recently opened a new pub location called the Hopworks BikeBar on N. Williams. How did you come up with the idea to integrate cycling and a pub?
	A. Weave passions into what you do – biked since 13 years old
02:17	4. Your company website mentions some of the ways your business operates sustainably. How do you define ‘sustainability?’
	I call it the 500 year plan, there’s limited resources, why should we pigishly consumer them at a rate that is unsustainable? The word sustainability describes behavior as a person and a business. Be an early adopter of more conservative energy consumption, weaving sustainability principle into every aspect of the business.
04:15	5. How do you ensure you maintain credibility in the eyes of green experts or skeptical on lookers?
	A. We don’t publicize our practices, a pull strategy, not push.
06:40	6. As a for profit business operation, how do you balance the economic realities of running a restaurant & brewery with your stated mission to “Produce world-class beer and food as sustainably as possible.”?
	A. Economic reality of balancing cash flow and staying in the black. Don’t take on too much. No debt.
10:40	7. Sustainability experts emphasize the importance of sourcing food locally. How would you characterize the food you serve in your restaurants from this perspective?
	A. Local products are the priority over organic, due to transportation impact of distant organic.

14:15	8. Your company's Mission, vision and values are closely tied to how you do business. How do you ensure you are hiring the right people who will fit the organization and promote your sustainable culture?
	A. There is a sustainability ethos associated with Hopworks attracting like minded people interested in being a part of it. They join the greater ideology.
17:39	9. Given Portland's penchant for micro brewing and sustainability, what are your thoughts about additional sustainably focused breweries and restaurants in the Portland Market?
	A. Definitely room for more growth, up to 1 pub per 5,000 people, currently at 1 per 30,000
19:40	10. Portland is a hot bed of niche restaurants and breweries. Where do you see Hopworks in five years in this environment?
	A. OLCC limits number of tap houses per – currently at the max for Hopworks.
22:18	11. The decision to systematically demolish an existing building and reuse as much material as possible in the construction of the brewery and Pub on SE Powell must have posed some challenges for you economically. How did you justify taking that route, both economically and functionally?
	A. A lot more expensive, from the start, but worth the payback in long term ethos
26:34	12. Portland as a whole claims to be a sustainable city. What role did the City of Portland play, if any, in launching your business, from an urban redevelopment perspective?
	A. None, they we no help by charging way too much, \$72,000 in permit fees.
28:31	13. Your company's sustainability efforts are primarily focused on minimizing ecological impact and reducing resource consumption. In what other ways do you feel Hopworks can impact the community and still remain profitable?
	A. We have a great history of giving back – only operating 3.5 years but have increased contributions.
32:39	14. A 2010 study published by Tourism and Hospitality Research concluded "Customers care about restaurants protecting the environment and would be willing to pay more to offset any additional costs associated with 'green' practices." What are your thoughts on this conclusion given that your restaurants and beer distribution channels offer prices comparable to traditionally run businesses?
	A. We hit the food costs, price points are competitive. 10 cents extra per beer to be sustainable
33:40	15. Please describe what would be for you a typical work day or work week.
	A. Professional "Plinko" (The price is Right, game show) – getting to the same destination, by getting deflected by people and issues that come up throughout the day.
37:30	16. What are some of your proudest achievements?
	A. You called me to learn about what I do, 16 years of work being acknowledged.
40:47	17. In most cases they say hind sight is 20/20. Looking back on the launch of Hopworks, what would you have done differently if given the chance?
	A. Enlist the help of a green contractor up front – a project of this size is a lot to take on w/o help